THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) and (b) Merchant Shipping Sector is open to private sector and the services are provided based on the economic viability and commercial judgement of the entrepreneur. If any proposal from private sector to operate the services in the coastal sector is received, technical consideration are examined and approval accorded.

Some entrepreneurs have envinced interest to operate transport services between Madras and Nagappattinam sector. The Govt, will encourage such operations.

Damage to the National Highways in Tamil Nadu due to Flood

1906. SHRI T.M. VENKATACHALAM: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the length of National Highways damaged in Tamil Nadu due to rains and floods recently;

(b) the National Highways so affected;

(c) the fund required to repair the damaged Highways;

(d) whether Government have sanctioned any funds for the purpose so far; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) and (b) During rains/floods in December, 1996 damages have occured at several places over the total National Highways network of 1890 Kms. (excluding urban lengths) in Tamil Nadu.

(c) to (e) An amount of Rs. 2.00 Crore has already been released. In addition to this, it is proposed to sanction estimates amounting to nearly Rs. 5.00 Crore.

National Highway from Bangalore to Pondicherry

1907. SHRI T.M. VENKATACHALAM:

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the long pending demand for National Highway from Bangalore to Pondicherry;

(b) whether Government propose to construct National Highway from Pondicherry to Krishnagiri which is already connected to Bangalore through National Highway;

(c) if so, whether survey has been ordered; and

(d) if so, by when it is likely to be conducted?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) No such proposal has been received by the Government.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Pending National Highway Projects

1908. SHRI SHIV CHARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many projects relating to. expansion of National Highways from various States are pending before Government; and

(b) if so, the State-wise details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir. Several references for declaration of State roads as National Highways are pending for want of adequate funds.

(b) The details are given in the Statement.